Alumni and Friends,

We are excited to share a new issue of Alumni Voices, which we launched this past summer. It has been an excellent vehicle for the Department of Urban Planning to connect with alums, and we are enjoying learning about the various paths taken since leaving Muncie. In this edition, we highlight these careers and successful endeavors in roles not usually associated with a degree in urban planning. One of the cases we make to CAP freshmen each year is that planning is a diverse field with many avenues to develop a career that fits your interests.

We believe this publication highlights those points as we hear about using skills, experience, and knowledge gained at BSU to pursue one of those "non-traditional" avenues! Special thanks to Christine Rhine, who shepherded this publication along and made it happen! We also appreciate Lohren Deeg's graphic design skills enhancing the artwork and layout.

To the alumni who contributed to this document - THANK YOU! We are proud and very appreciative of all time and effort you made to provide us these great stories. If you missed this opportunity, don't worry; we will have another chance to hear from you this spring as we will continue collecting Alumni Voices!

Happy New Year!

Scott Truex, Chair
Currently, I am an energy portfolio strategist at Hoosier Energy. Earlier this year our board made the announcement that they would soon close their coal-fired power plant in southwest Indiana, which meant that Hoosier needed to put together a team of people who could identify, negotiate, and execute renewable power contracts—whether solar, wind, battery storage, etc.—to replace that generation source. I know what you are thinking—why the heck are you on that team? I’m not an electrical engineer nor a long-time utility whiz, so how did I land here?

Throughout my career, no matter what the title, I have used skills learned in my urban planning schooling and experience that are valuable, flexible, and interchangeable. Knowing how to listen (read: all those daggone public meetings), strategize, think holistically, and genuinely interact with—and influence—other human beings are all skills that I gained and honed from my planning background. These are skills you can take anywhere.

Employers are looking for these skill sets to navigate and create consensus-based solutions to difficult problems—that is.
what planners do daily! Learning to listen first, speak second, engage stakeholders, and interpret legal codes and documents has added arrows to my quiver that other careers simply do not offer.

Therefore, although I am no longer in a technical planning role, I have a skill set that is valuable in different positions, making me thankful for the path my planning background created and the skills I picked up. I also learned that, rather than drawing a circle around a finite trajectory,

job title, or occupation, I’ve carved out four questions that help align me with what I ‘want’ to be doing: 1) am I engaged?; 2) am I learning?; 3) am I making an impact?; 4) do I have time to do things I enjoy outside of my professional commitments?

My planning background, skills, and relationships have helped create many paths vs. paving just one, and for that I am eternally grateful.

Christy Langley, BUPD 2004, is an energy portfolio strategist at Hoosier Energy.

Alumni stories: my surprising career

Adrian Scott Fine, senior director of advocacy, Los Angeles Conservancy

Lately I have been thinking a lot about this premise; you cannot be what you cannot see. This relates to us as people but also to our communities. It is about understanding the past, our present and how we got here, and planning for a future that does not needlessly throw away things that are of value.

The work I do is fundamentally about storytelling through the built environment, saving places that matter, finding ways to integrate the old and new, and ensuring the intangibles and soul of a community are not needlessly lost. Heritage conservation is as much about beautiful architecture as affordable housing, climate change and sustainability, and ensuring the diversity of our communities, and this legacy is honestly and fully represented in the places we choose to preserve.

I’m a planner, just a different type, as a preservationist that focuses on the conservation and heritage of a place. Rather than the government sector, I chose to do this work through nonprofit advocacy efforts with NGOs, initially for the statewide preservation organization Indiana Landmarks, then the National Trust for Historic Preservation in Philadelphia and Washington, D.C., and now the Los Angeles Conservancy. I am fortunate to have been a part of shaping the U.S. preservation movement while working at the largest(CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE)
local, statewide, and national preservation organizations.

While preservation is sometimes equated to the icing on the cake, as nice but not essential, that is not my experience. Despite the misconceptions, this work is not about stopping new development, rather managing change (that is, planning). Older and historic places can be sources of healing and reconciliation and have the innate ability to tell a story that needs to be heard. When you can see and touch a place that has experienced history and impacted peoples’ lives, it is powerful and can inspire. When the place in which the story happened is no longer standing, it is a loss and a form of community erasure.

I constantly draw upon my CAP experience and working with Community Based Projects, of what I learned and did not learn about planning and design. It provided me the foundation and basic understanding that led me toward acquiring what planning really looks like in practice, the politics of it, and how it plays out differently in large and small communities, hot and cold real estate markets, and across the country. Professors Linda Keys, Jim Segedy and Scott Truex are a few among many CAP folks who imparted on me the importance of truly listening to communities and hearing what residents really want and value. I use this daily.

I intersect with traditional planning often, currently serving on a Los Angeles task force to develop a new Housing Element for the city, tackling an immense challenge to provide much-needed housing of all types but especially affordable, to meet the moment now and in the next eight years. Nationally and in Los Angeles, I have led efforts to raise awareness about the harm created by teardowns and the ‘mansionization’ trend on older and historic neighborhoods, and helping to implement planning policies to manage incompatible new residential development.

Currently I’m working to press for new tools and financial incentives to help struggling legacy businesses throughout Los Angeles (now more than ever during Covid-19). These are places that anchor and give our communities and neighborhoods identity, and where people have formed meaningful connections. Helping to ensure these businesses survive is a matter of equity, economic development, and place-making.

In the last year I have also been reflecting a lot, as many are doing now, thinking about how Covid-19, Black Lives Matter, and the #metoo movement do or do not affect me directly. I’m listening, learning, and understanding in a new way how privilege can benefit some and others not at all. From a planning and heritage conservation perspective, what I did not learn or fully grasp until recently about these fields is their direct role in de jure racism. This did not just happen, it was baked into planning through zoning and racial covenants, and the destruction and displacement of our communities through urban renewal as an intentional act, policy and practice. The legacy of these actions and decades of disparity does not simply go away, as it is deeply embedded and rooted within our communities.

In the heritage conservation field we are taking a step back and rethinking how we

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have contributed to The structural racism that exists throughout the U.S. and practicing what we say by being antiracist. Personally I know what it means to be different and discriminated against, as a member of the LGBTQ community, but I failed to fully see it as it is and occurs on a daily basis for many others. Planning plays an important role and contributes, both positively and negatively. Acknowledgement is empowerment, and planning has the ability to rise to the moment and help reverse course in our communities, through healing and allowing communities of color to be seen and counted.

One of my projects is the Chicano Moratorium March in East Los Angeles, where we have been working to have this story and place recognized through designation and listing in the National Register of Historic Places. In 1970, Los Angeles’ predominant Chicano/Latinx population and community stood up for its rights to demand better treatment, with thousands marching in the streets much like people are doing today. It has taken us five years to achieve this effort, as we work outside traditional preservation approaches to acknowledge this culture, march route, and heritage. Now, on the fiftieth anniversary of the march, this story about people and a place will finally be acknowledged.

For too long, heritage conservation has primarily concentrated on beautiful architectural specimens and a largely wealthy, white male narrative. Thankfully that is starting to change, and this is what excites me most about my work in planning and heritage conservation today. It goes back to the premise I started with, that you cannot be what you cannot see. Until our communities fully reflect and celebrate all the cultures and stories of people and places, planning has much work to do.

Adrian Scott Fine, BA Urban Planning and Development, BS Environmental Design 1992, is senior director of advocacy at the Los Angeles Conservatory and the Department of Urban Planning’s 2012-2013 Distinguished Alumnus of the Year.

The 1952 CBS Television City is the first large-scale facility designed specifically for television production in the United States. For more than six decades it has been the portal by which some of America’s most beloved television shows, like The Carol Burnett Show, have been produced. In 2018 an agreement was reached by which the historic building and important viewsheds will be preserved while allowing for new development for the rest of the 25-acre property.
When I picked up my belongings and moved across the country to Arizona in July 2011, I was so excited to begin my career as an Urban Planner. In the midst of a recession, I had decided that I would start in the public sector before landing a big flashy career in an urban design studio, undoubtedly with a sky-rise corner office and floor to ceiling windows.

Then, the real-world hit. I sent letters to 27 municipalities and a few private firms looking for an unpaid internship. Two responded: the City of Tempe, which let me know they would put me in their pool of potential interns, and the City of Surprise, who conducted a brief interview and decided to take a chance on a post-college intern. I would later find out that I secured the unofficial position for two key reasons: 1) I had my resume and cover letter printed on heavy cardstock and 2) I pulled a golf tee out of my pocket at some point in the interview which sparked a sidebar discussion.

I felt like I was finally starting to get some traction when on the second day of my internship, the planner who had brought me on let me know he had been offered a position in a different city and my internship future was uncertain. The second interviewer, the one who appreciated the golf tee, was in the Economic Development Division and offered to take me in until the other planners could get their heads above water enough to take on a new intern.

I felt like a fish out of water, but it was clear that so many of the skills I had learned in my undergrad allowed for an easy transition into this field. My graphic design abilities quickly set us apart from competitors. Most city economic development agencies had to run through their communications team to get marketing support and materials. I was able to create exactly what we were looking for within hours, an important factor in economic development.

My data analytics skill was a second critical asset, especially combined with graphic design. I was able to research and identify the data needed to provide a compelling story, then turn it into a marketing format that helped decision...
makers choose to locate their business in the city. Critical thinking, public speaking, communication, and leadership skills are just a few of the other skills I graduated from Ball State University with that led to immense career success.

Including my three-year internship, I worked in the Economic Development Department for nearly a decade. During this time, I developed business attraction proposals that represented investments of more than $336 billion and 1.3 million new jobs, designed and managed an international award winning retail survey/campaign, graduated with my Masters in Public Administration, and so many other achievements.

All of these opportunities were made possible by taking a few chances, and in large part, to the preparation and skill development provided through Ball State University’s CAP program. A year ago, I was headhunted and joined a private civil engineering firm to assist their marketing division with proposal coordination. I loved the idea of diversifying my skillset and gaining new opportunities from a different perspective.

One of the best pieces of advice I have received from a mentor is that sometimes your career is a bit like the board game Chutes and Ladders. Sometimes you feel like you are taking big steps forward, sometimes like it is a step backward. If you learn to embrace the unknown and trust in your skills and abilities, you just may be impressed with where you can end up.

*Kelsey Lamphier, BUPD 2011, is marketing coordinator for Wood, Patel, & Associates, a civil engineering firm, in Phoenix, Arizona.*
I graduated from CAP with a BUPD in May 2012 and immediately moved to Indianapolis to continue the internship I had with Milhaus, a real estate development company founded by several fellow CAP alumni. Since that time, I have been blessed in my young career to be on a team that has developed more than $1B of transformative mixed use and multi-family properties throughout the country. The skills and knowledge I gained from CAP set me up to think about real estate in a way that created value for not only our investors, but for the communities at large. We have found opportunities to align our products with the wants and needs of neighborhoods and communities that desire new, thoughtful housing options.

However, CAP did not teach me to only identify and meet the housing needs of communities. The BUPD curriculum taught me to look to the needs of a community holistically.

For centuries, churches have been a nucleus or even a starting point for communities and cities and towns across the world. When I moved to downtown Indianapolis after I graduated, I found myself longing for a Lutheran church nearby in this new city I called home. I couldn’t find what I was looking for—a biblically rooted, forward-thinking church that focused on being a nucleus for its community. When I learned other downtown residents found themselves in a similar position, I decided to apply what I learned in school and help start one myself.

By strategically aligning with a larger multi-site suburban congregation and a smaller grassroots group of its downtown disciples, we started what would eventually become Cornerstone Indianapolis. Fast forward through intimate small group meetings in homes and borrowed office space from another CAP graduate, this church grew and was sought out by a dying congregation on the near eastside of Indianapolis. Joining forces, Cornerstone took over the Englewood neighborhood congregation’s facilities, breathing new life into a century old structure and former community nucleus. Cornerstone, today, is full of active, vibrant disciples reaching out in their surrounding community to see how the church can help it reach its holistic goals—and providing a welcoming place for them to do it.

It is rewarding to see how this experience aligned with the principles and skills I learned through the BUPD curriculum: visioning, historic preservation, community development, and strategic planning. CAP graduates have such a gift in the multi-disciplinary curriculum they have gone through—creating so many possibilities to leverage their skills beyond the walls of their day job. I am so proud to be a part of this BUPD alumni network doing wonderful things throughout their communities.

Jake D. Dietrich, BUPD 2012, is vice president of Development for Milhaus.
During my time in the CAP Urban Planning program, I became involved in the campus chapter of Habitat for Humanity. During my last year, Scott Truex suggested that I consider spending a year as an AmeriCorps volunteer working full time for Habitat for Humanity. At the time there were 10 different locations around the country that you could choose from, and it just so happened that the APA National Conference was in Seattle in April, so I attended the conference and interviewed for the position. I fell in love with the natural beauty and vibrancy of the Pacific Northwest immediately. I took the AmeriCorps job and ended up spending two years working for a local Habitat for Humanity affiliate here in Seattle, teaching volunteers and future homeowners how to build housing.

It was a clear example of the blind leading the blind, but I relied on the skills I learned at BSU to try and fail, to course correct and then to try something different.

After Habitat, I spent a few years working for a city building and planning department, but I missed the tangible results that come with construction. After some soul searching, going to the University of Washington for Construction Management and then taking a break for a year to travel abroad, I landed back in Seattle ready to find a job in the construction industry. Seattle in 2005 was booming thanks to a raucous tech industry fueled by companies like Microsoft and Amazon growing exponentially. The need for housing—especially affordable housing—to contain the growing population was immense, and I landed my dream job with Walsh Construction, a local mid-sized construction company that specializes in building affordable mixed use apartment buildings.

As a project engineer, I was in charge of all the details of building projects from preconstruction through completion. I enjoyed being on jobsites, getting things built each day, and working with a vast array of people toward a common goal. Every day I used the skills I learned at BSU CAP – plan reading, attention to detail, working within a team, strong communication, and especially problem solving. Just like in urban planning, each
project that we build is one of a kind and requires an ability to remain nimble and problem solve every day.

During the last 16 years at Walsh, I’ve built about 1500 units of housing, most of them affordable. I have enjoyed working with our non-profit, mission-based clients to house some of the toughest populations: those struggling with homelessness, addiction, discrimination, mental health issues and sometimes criminal records.

While my city has become more divided between the haves and the have nots, I’ve been able to utilize the talents and skills I gained from CAP Urban Planning to make a difference in my community through my work at Walsh.

A couple of years ago, I was honored to take on the role of general manager and vice president of Walsh Washington, so while I don’t get to be engulfed in the details on an individual project like I used to, I now get to help mentor project teams and help make projects viable to get them to construction. The foundational skills I learned at Ball State truly help guide me every day in my current role as a leader of a general contracting business.

Elizabeth Rinehart, BUPD 1999, is general manager and vice president of Walsh Construction Co./Washington.

Alumni stories: my surprising career

Lauren Petersen, senior director of relationship management, TechPoint

Community has always been a common denominator for me in all of my major life pursuits. During my freshman year at Ball State University, my long-held interest in architecture and my passion for people and communities came together, sparking a new interest in understanding the art of place making. I was fascinated by the dynamics of governmental systems and how policies affect people’s lives and actions. Thus, I chose to pursue a degree in Urban Planning and Development, which allowed me to establish a holistic understanding and approach to serving individuals and communities. A degree in planning empowered me to grow as a community activist, creative problem solver, and relationship builder with the aim of strengthening the lives of our most vulnerable neighbors and uplifting the most high-promise organizations across our state.

As an undergraduate planning student, I was able to pursue experiences that offered insight into the legal tools that guide community development and place making as an intern

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at the Indiana State House of Representatives and Indiana State Department of Agriculture. Upon graduation, I had the opportunity of a lifetime to serve as a Fulbright Scholar in Poland, where I focused much of my cultural ambassadorship on civic involvement and volunteered directly with the U.S. Embassy and Consulate. These experiences further piqued my interests in public diplomacy and confirmed my devotion to public service.

In 2015, I said yes to my dream job at TechPoint, as I was compelled to make a place impact. Currently, I serve as senior director of relationship management and am driven by my team’s purposeful mission to promote and accelerate the growth of our tech ecosystem, create a respected and beloved local brand, and become a model for innovative economic development nationally. We aspire for Central Indiana to be a top tech hub nationally, and for Indiana to be a top state for tech among Midwest states.

I’ve committed over the past eight years to creating a strong and thriving tech landscape through my roles at ExactTarget, Salesforce, and now at TechPoint, via relationship management, economic development, policy advocacy, and community engagement. My personal philosophy regarding community service is "everybody, everywhere matters." Presently, my passion for creating a sustainable prosperity and quality of life for all Hoosiers and future generations extends to my positions as a board member for United Way of Central Indiana and Ball State Women’s Discovery Fund and also as a Women’s Fund of Central Indiana Engagement Committee member.

Through these roles, my goal is to help create a welcoming, supportive and conducive living environment and community that fosters self-sufficiency, respect, and support from its members.

I’m a firm believer that this Central Indiana community has given us a gift, and if we do our job well, we give that gift back. A planning degree truly helped get me to where I am today and has prepared me for success in my current dream career to do just that.

Lauren Petersen, BUPD 2011, is senior director of relationship management at TechPoint in Indianapolis.

Why I Give

“The financial aid and scholarships I received as a College of Architecture and Planning student allowed me to discover my interest in and love for place-making. Without the investment from the CAP alumni community, I wouldn't have been able to attend the Summer Design Thinking Workshop as a high school senior, which was the catalyst for me to pursue my degree at BSU - a decision that forever changed my life!”

Lauren Petersen, BUPD ‘11

When You Give, WE FLY.

oneballstate-bsu.edu
Hi Scott,

You may or may not remember me, from the class of 1993, but I certainly remember you. Your classes related to GIS system operation and theory really became the basis of my career after college ... and ultimately led me to where I am these days.

After graduation, I was recruited by the Army and spent the next quite a few years developing a system for them called the TIIP (the Topographic Imagery Integration Prototype). It was a bunch of really spectacular hardware for the time (Sunspark 20 workstations, high resolution scanners for print material, a 36” laser imagesetter that could make printing plates, a direct line to the air force guys who could get me images from the satellites we don’t officially have, and access to the U.S. government’s map library of the world).

Thing was, no one had any idea what to do with it or how ... so the first thing that had to be done was to develop standardized electronic products and the training guides to make those products; those went into field units and became a key component to the Army’s land warfare capabilities over the following 20 years. That first manual I wrote on GIS theory is apparently still in use today.

The TIIP was intended to shrink the time needed to create a new map or map product for a field commander from a month+ to mere hours. We achieved that. Lat and Long to a custom satellite shot, rectified, gridded, and with DTED elevations on it, from request to printed materials in about four hours ... in 1994! (Long enough ago now that I can actually talk about it! 😄)

When my time in the service was up, I came back to Indiana (the Hoosier Homing Gene), and entered the technology consulting arena. Quickly became a senior project manager for large software development efforts, or implementations ... Because there isn’t a more solid planning process for any other industry than learning to deal with a time horizon in decades ... like you do in urban planning.

These days I own, and am shoulder deep into, my own company, Geoangel. I’ve taken the fundamental skills acquired over the years,
and used them to create a truly revolutionary product/service for nursing homes. It pairs real-time data feeds from GPS, our proprietary Interior Positioning system (uses BLE signals, wifi triangulation, etc.) and a smart-watch worn by nursing home residents. We’re accurate to about 4 cm within our sensor network, and when we switch over to GPS can track someone anywhere on the planet. Our smartwatch sensors can take a full set of vital signs from the person wearing the watch, at will, without the nurse being involved. It is truly changing the way care is given to our seniors in every facility we install in. (And it’s running my team a little ragged trying to install them as fast as everyone would like.)

A lot of different skill sets, from a lot of different areas... but it all started with a basis in how to think, how to dissect a problem, how to establish possible solutions, and how to test and validate those solutions. All of those things I learned at CAP.

Derek Stiver, BUPD 1993, is owner of Geoangel, based in Carmel, Ind.
traditional urban planning, these skills not only allowed me to stay engaged in work that I’m passionate about, but in a place like a utility—these skills set me apart in an industry dominated by engineers and operators.

The fact is that urban planners have a transformative impact in industries that don’t traditionally have planning backgrounds at the table. Some of my current work includes creating a new non-profit organization focused on economic equity; partnering with a developer to build a net zero energy affordable housing community; developing an economic development strategy that will build a stronger region; and planning a community engagement strategy around renewable natural gas projects that will bring hundreds of jobs to economically distressed communities.

I have to admit, this is the exciting and impactful work that I envisioned as a CAP student but did not fully experience when I was in a traditional urban planning role. After working in the public sector and in consulting, I found the utility to be a great place to exercise my talents – providing a public need with business rigor.

A planner working in a fossil fuel industry may also surprise you. But it takes passionate people from within these industries to be stewards of our values to make lasting impact. It is motivating and inspiring to work in a sector so critical to the clean energy economy—working to advance energy efficiency, renewable natural gas, the resilience of solar and wind, all while ensuring that energy remains affordable and reliable so no one gets left out in the cold (especially in Chicago winters). Planning skills are essential in the energy industry where broad engagement and problem-solving is needed to tackle some of the biggest challenges ahead.

Planners are problem-solvers, bridge-builders and connectors. We have the skills to listen, tackle complex issues and bring people together. I’m sure my career journey will lead me to other sectors and experiences in the future. But no matter where it leads, I’m grateful for my CAP experience and Cardinal family – the wonderful peers and professors who were there when the journey began!

Meena Beyers, BUPD 2002, is vice president of business and community development for Nicor Gas in Northern Illinois.
Education doesn’t just happen to us. We have to make it happen. Student, professional, and personal lives intersect and present series of questions to answer, sometimes for yourself, sometimes for others.

Alan W. Dowd wrote this for Legion magazine: “Information evolves into knowledge as we organize the information into something useable and then apply it to a problem or need. Wisdom comes along as we combine knowledge with experience and judgement then apply it to the challenges of life.” The study of architecture, planning, and related disciplines provides that ability to combine knowledge and wisdom to meet challenges and improve quality of life. It also allows for combining academic tools in innovative ways.

A good use of communication is to impart some history early in the process. Explaining previous events and developments reminds the audience that citizens had to make hard choices to bring about attributes they now enjoy. Sometimes decisions made in the past resulted in problems that now need attention.

AP skills were extremely helpful for me working in civil engineering firms. Infrastructure projects require rights of way and purchases, environmental mitigation, and tax funding or user fees. This is an opportunity to use maps, photographs, and architectural renderings, and historic examples to build a vision of the future.

Command of economic and demographic statistics encourage community leaders to upgrade existing facilities, improve quality of life, and increase property values. In the span of a single project an effective CAP professional communicates, utilizes teamwork, uses design thinking, and helps solve problems.

I found a real CAP calling in economic development. Community leaders are eager to gain additional tax revenues, user fees, new job opportunities, new residents, and additional economic impact. On the other side are modifications in land use, additional loads on public services and facilities, shifts in local and regional labor forces, possible competition with existing businesses, and changes in business and personal relationships. However, every community has an economic development story which opens an important subset of communication: storytelling.

Local history woven into a TRUE story can open many minds. Having the audience hear
how the attributes they enjoy came to exist gets attention. Whether the community owes its existence to its location, resources, transportation, or its people, somewhere therein lies a story to advance your project.

The next step is to project that successful past into the future. An economic impact analysis is helpful, and a local economic development agency might provide the service. Economic impact analysis software will generate pages and columns of numbers to study, but just like local history, there is a scenario in the numbers that must be woven into a story and communicated to your audience. Looking at opportunity, you will be surprised how fast your teams come together solving problems and designing their future.

Ours is not rocket science, but people science, and key to the science of people are communication and relationships. CAP skills bring people together. As I began: “Wisdom comes along as we combine knowledge with experience and judgement then apply it to the challenges of life.” Let your wisdom and the use of your transferrable skills guide you through any and all careers creating livable spaces, building successful organizations, improving communities, and maintaining happy, healthy, sustainable lifestyles.

Mark Keillor, BS, URS 1975, has a long career in community and economic development and is the founder of markkeillor.com/theseminar.

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Alumni stories: my surprising career

Eric Richard, senior analyst, Brailsford & Dunlavey, Chicago

My career after Ball State’s urban planning program has involved two very different professions and experiences. After graduating in 2012 with a BUPD degree from the College of Architecture and Planning I took an internship working in the planning department for the Village of Franklin Park, a western suburb of Chicago. It was a great opportunity to see firsthand what planning at the local level is like and to use some of the skills I acquired in school.

Some of the notable initiatives that I was involved with at the village included the development of a new zoning code and new comprehensive plan to better position the community for long-term development. I helped to secure millions of dollars in grants and tax incentives to support infrastructure projects and new businesses.

Additionally, I was the primary staff liaison for three public review boards – the zoning

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board, planning commission and economic development commission. My responsibilities included the creation of monthly staff reports for zoning cases, economic impact analysis to support applications for tax exemptions, presentation during public hearings and communication with commission members, the public and businesses seeking governmental approvals.

In many ways, the skills acquired and experience gained from the planning program at Ball State absolutely prepared me for my job in government. In 2017 I took a new job with a private firm, Brailsford and Dunlavey (B&D). B&D is a leading planning and development advisory and program management firm. Our primary clients are colleges and universities, PK-12 schools, municipalities, and professional sports organizations. Our purpose is to inspire and empower organizations to maximize the value of investments that advance communities. At B&D, we drive decisions and outcomes. Our goal is to plan projects that get approved, funded, and built. I work out of our Chicago regional office where most of our work is for higher education clients.

My work responsibilities are very different than my work in local government. I perform market and demand analysis to help inform the potential scale of a development project. We develop detailed financial models that test financial impacts under various conditions for the capital projects we are planning. Our work might be part of a larger campus master plan, or many times we are brought in to focus on specific assets such as campus housing or other auxiliary facilities such as recreation centers, student unions, and athletic venues.

We are well known for our real estate advisory services, especially as it relates to public-private partnerships. Many colleges and universities across the country are looking to the private sector to help them improve their aging building stock, without assuming the risk. We evaluate these opportunities for our clients and help them to determine the best delivery approach.

B&D has several connections to Ball State outside of myself. We were part of the team that developed the 2015 Campus Master Plan (in partnership with SmithGroup). Our work specifically focused on housing, dining, recreation, and athletics. On two separate occasions (1996 and 2000) we evaluated spaces needs for the student center. Furthermore, the director of our Chicago office, Ryan Jensen, is a fellow Ball State alum. He graduated from the MURP in 2009.

I can confidently say that without my planning background, I would not be in the position I am in today. I think the skills and experiences learned during my undergraduate tenure that have been most useful to me in my career are without a doubt communication and collaboration. Planners and anyone working to improve the built environment must be able to communicate visions and ideas effectively. Additionally, capital projects and major planning initiatives do not happen without extensive collaboration. My job requires me to collaborate with many people—my colleagues, architects, engineers, attorneys, college administrators, students, public officials and more! It’s imperative that I can understand each of these individual’s perspective and role in the project and be able to have productive conservations with them. Want to learn more about what I do? Visit our website at www.bdconnect.com/.

Eric Richard, BUPD 2012, is a senior analyst at Brailsford & Dunlavey in Chicago.
Matthew Fortunak, vice president & treasurer, Owens Corning

I want to thank Scott for the invitation to share my story about an atypical career path for a planning graduate.

By way of background, I earned my BUPD in 1997 and have many fond memories of the program. I learned how to use a big picture approach to guide my thinking while placing sustainability at the forefront of my endeavors. I also met my future wife in the CAP program. We have been married 21 glorious years and have two wonderful daughters.

I spent the first three years of my career working for local government. I gained exposure to traditional planning activity... zoning, affordable housing initiatives, strategic planning, etc. Yet, I grew frustrated with the pace of change. I was also developing an aptitude for project financing.

My situation enabled a return to school full time to pursue an MBA. I then embarked on a career in corporate finance. I rotated through more than a dozen roles at two Fortune 500 companies since 2002. I am fortunate to have met some tremendous people all over the world (who I now consider friends) while partnering on various initiatives. Presently, I am vice president and treasurer for Owens Corning, a global building and industrial materials company based in Toledo, Ohio.

I still use the creative thinking skills I developed at Ball State and never lost my passion to create a better world for future generations. The following are just a couple of recent examples of my planning spirit still alive and well.

I was named to my current role in late 2018. Almost immediately, I embarked on a journey to advance sustainability in a most untraditional way. I spoke to more than 80 firms that run fixed income funds and invited them to join Owens Corning in advancing the sustainability agenda by investing in the first-ever Green Bond issued by a U.S. industrial company. Investors provided $450 million with the commitment that funds would be used for “eligible green projects.”

Project examples include purchasing renewable energy from new facilities in advance of their construction, investing in equipment to produce products that save energy for the end consumer, and procuring waste material to reuse in the production of new products. I am proud to report that the company exceeded that original commitment by spending more than $480 million on such initiatives to date.

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I am blessed to have meaningful employment, but not everyone is so fortunate. I also volunteer on the board of directors for a nonprofit organization in my community that assists job seekers in overcoming barriers to employment. Those being assisted may have just exited correctional facilities or have mental or physical disabilities. I am inspired by their stories and their determination. It is life changing to be able to financially support oneself. The organization seeks to find jobs for those individuals. The achievements have steadily grown over my time on the board from helping secure jobs for 61 people during 2015 to 271 people during 2019.

In summary, I developed a skill set and a passion at Ball State that I believe enable me to make a difference in the world similar to a traditional planner. I am just advancing the agenda in a way that is appropriate for me.

Matthew Fortunak, BUPD 1997, is vice president and treasurer at Owens Corning in Toledo, Ohio.

While we often hear it described as a career ladder, sometimes it looks more like a jungle gym. And that’s okay, you can still land exactly where you were meant to be and have the skills needed to rise to what you are supposed to be doing.

My undergraduate thesis was on small town economic development, with Hagerstown, Ind., as a case study. I went to work for the Indiana Economic Development Academy as an economic development specialist. I had worked there as a student in fourth year but spent fifth year working at Community Based Projects (CBP). In that role I learned a lot about economic development, economic development data, and adult education.

In my last year there I was course director for the Indiana Basic Economic Development Course. I had taught several of the sessions in the years leading up to that.

Alumni stories: my surprising career

Rose Scovel, AICP, Principal Planner I, Indianapolis MPO

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When I left, I was the associate director. I had also earned my master’s degree (I finished my thesis the next year) in public administration and done some work on regional governance and collaboration as part of my studies.

The next step in my career involved moving to Indianapolis and switching to the private sector. I had done my internship in the private sector and always intended to work as a consultant. Since I didn’t have consulting experience per se, even with five years of professional experience and AICP certification, I was brought in as an Urban Designer I.

I learned how human resources works in large organizations, developing and managing project budgets, marketing projects, and delivering quality work on budget. HNTB has tremendous project manager training, and I am continuously thankful for the opportunities for learning and growth I had there. After a few years (and a string of promotions to Urban Designer V) I was ready to be a senior planner.

I went to a Michigan-based small boutique planning firm called LSL Planning to work in their Indianapolis office as a senior planner. After one year I bought into ownership and also carried the title of associate.

The firm was a good fit, and I learned more about operations and marketing. I learned how operations were different in a small firm. I also learned what it was like to lose my job through no fault of my own. The Great Recession took a toll on our senior-level firm, and I was laid off after nine months of being part time. More human resources learning experience.

My next move was into the non-profit sector where I was brought in as a project manager to manage the technical assistance efforts of the Indiana Association for Community Economic Development. I learned what it was like to work in the non-profit sector and to be a membership-based organization. I learned to manage projects with limited resources and funded by state and federal grants. I earned certifications as a Community Development Block Grant administrator and in HOME program regulations. I learned community development programs, and collective impact approaches to planning and engagement. When I left I was director of capacity building.

Then it was time for some public sector experience. And building my dream position. I went to work for the Indianapolis Metropolitan Planning Organization (IMPO) where I am today. I was a senior planner and a strategic hire to help the IMPO advance the new strategic plan which called for separation from the City of Indianapolis as our administrative and fiscal oversight agency and expanding the IMPO beyond transportation into economic development, land use, housing, and environmental resources (particularly water).

I was tasked with building relationships with panels on these topic areas, managing the regional activity centers project, and managing the scenario planning work. Both of these projects would lead into the 2050 Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP). The MTP has historically been called a long-range transportation plan.

It was fantastic to come into working with a team of people I already had some experience with (including fellow BSU grads Sean Northup and Jen Higginbotham who is my supervisor). I learned the public side of consulting work, being the client rather than the consultant. With the transition to an independent organization, I have been
tasked with implementation of our human resources information system and now maintain that system (which includes time sheets, payroll, hiring onboarding/offboarding, and performance evaluation).

Most excitingly, I successfully led the effort to secure the first non-transportation grant for the IMPO with the award of CARES Act funding from the Economic Development Administration (EDA) and will now manage the development of a comprehensive economic development strategy for Central Indiana. I am looking forward to our work in convening, informing, planning, and funding opportunity in Central Indiana and potential designation of Central Indiana as an economic development district by the EDA. I was recently promoted to Principal Planner I and have a growing role in the direction of the IMPO as we seek to serve Central Indiana in more ways.

This work is meaningful and pulls together the formal and informal education, experience, and networking that has occurred over the past 20+ years and allows me to have an impact where I live and do work that is both exciting and meaningful. I don’t need to be at the top of the ladder, but in a place where I can pull the jungle gym together and build strong networks.

Rose Scovel, BUPD 1999, MPA 2005, is Principal Planner I for the Indianapolis MPO. She is also the department’s 2017 Distinguished Alumna of the Year.

Alumni stories: my surprising career

Claire Thomison, senior business analyst Dyson, Chicago

When I started out at CAP, I had no idea of what urban planning was, and it wasn’t until the end of that first year that I found myself drawn to the scale of impact that urban planning work could have. As I moved through my years at CAP, I became increasingly interested in the many systems that impact urban environments, and I focused my attention on economics.

After graduating from Ball State, I completed a master’s degree in urban planning and policy at University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC) with a concentration in economic development. While I was at UIC, I worked on several economic impact analyses as a research assistant at UIC’s Center for Urban Economic Development. While this work was challenging, I enjoyed the technical and modeling aspect of it. Through my master’s project at UIC, a web mapping application for a local economic development organization, and analysis projects following my time at
UIC, I started picking up coding skills and quickly realized that I wanted a career that had a programming component.

I’ve since worked as an analyst in several different roles, and I’m currently on the Americas Analytics team at Dyson. My day-to-day consists primarily of supporting Dyson’s business in the Americas through both large scale data science projects and ad-hoc analyses to inform decision making. I also do a fair amount of data wrangling, maintenance, and automation work to ensure data is ready for use in projects.

While an immediate connection between the skill sets required for urban planning and business analytics may not seem clear, I have found several skills that I was first exposed to in CAP to be extremely relevant, if not critical, to my work in analytics.

Design continues to play a role in my day-to-day through data visualization and results communication. Even if an analysis is technically sound, it’s really not that helpful if the audience isn’t able to understand results, implications, or recommendations for next steps. Using design principles for data visualization, information organization, and presentation deck creation, I’m able to clearly communicate technical topics to non-technical audiences and make recommendations based on analysis results.

Spatial statistics and analytics are also key skills required for my role. I regularly use geographic information systems (GIS) to display spatial information on maps, conduct spatial analyses, and generate features for modeling. It has been interesting to take the GIS skills I originally developed in a planning context at CAP and UIC and translate them to solving business problems.

I’ve also enjoyed learning how to incorporate spatial processes and workflows into data science pipelines. Currently I’m working to convert some of my regular GIS workflows to Python; it has been challenging, but very rewarding!

When I first started moving into analytics, I worried I didn’t have the right background for the space. However, I’ve since learned to see the skillset I developed at CAP to very much be a strength in my career. While I did have a lot of catch up to do in coding, statistics, and business analytics (and I’m still constantly learning), I’ve been able to layer these skills on top of my existing communication, design, and GIS skills built at CAP which gives me a unique perspective and approach to problem solving.

*Claire Thomison, BUPD 2012, is a senior business analyst with Dyson in Chicago.*
As urban planners we learn of Jane Jacob’s incredible influence on the field often and early on. She never received a degree from an accredited urban planning program, nor did she receive any formal training. But her impact on the field defined an era and is everlasting. She saw problems and solutions better than the so-called experts and challenged the accepted policy models of the time.

As Jacobs said herself, “a degree and an education are not necessarily synonymous”. Our experiences and perspectives can shape us and the world just as much. We talk often how anyone can be a planner, but it would be wise to accept the inverse of this lesson. That we can go anywhere professionally, as long as we know how to use our voice, share our story and possess that magic to stir men’s blood.

After graduation I had trouble finding a planning job in the Midwest. Also as an openly queer woman, I knew I was pushing my luck trying to find work. I felt myself turned off from urban planning, I didn’t want to spend my days in a county building telling someone their fence is a foot over regulation.

I decided to take an internship after graduation in DC doing communications for a LGBTQ political action committee for the 2016 election. Comms was a natural fit because I’ve always been a strong writer. In planning we write policy proposals and learn to talk about complex urban planning methodology in a way that's digestible for everyone and garners support. We learn how to get a community town hall excited about complete streets just as much as us. That’s the core of communications work.

After that job I did some more comms contract work in DC, including for an environmental consulting firm involved with the 2018 Global Climate Action Summit. For that position I talked about how planning is actually an environmental degree. You can’t learn about the built environment without understanding the natural environment. We learn to build cities that are sustainable and in harmony with nature.

The day after that contract ended I started another position with the Human Rights Campaign, helping with organizing voter turnout for Democrats in the 2018 election. The role required me to teach and manage people how to use phone and text banking.
Leading a team of 50 volunteers and staff, sounds similar to a community charrette event doesn't it? Same skills, different application.

Today, in my current role I work in the program and policy side at the National Women’s Law Center. I had experience in politics and nonprofits, but this role actually requires a lot of InDesign and Wordpress, things I learned and used a lot in my planning classes.

You can pursue any job you want. I guarantee you have the skills, you just have to learn how to market them. That’s what resumes and interviews are about, making that sell. Distill your experience and education and potential jobs into basic functions and skills. Look for those common threads. Most people don’t know what urban planning is or what's on your resume, you have to connect those threads for them and tell that story.

I don’t always talk about all of my job experiences, but I always talk about my urban planning degree. It’s that versatile, you just got to know how to pitch it for each job to get people excited to hire you. Just as we learn as planners to translate community input into policy solutions, we can translate our experience into success in new fields.

Marissa Moore, BUPD 2016, works at the National Women's Law Center, Washington, D.C.

Alumni stories: my surprising career

Daniel Haake, senior transportation planner, HDR, Indianapolis

I was a transportation planner before I knew the profession existed. As a kid, I designed streets for my toy cars out of poster board. I was obsessed with INDOT's nearby I-94/Cline Avenue interchange reconstruction and all things trains. I even helped refurbish an old caboose. Fast forward 30 years, I've been lucky enough to turn a childhood passion into my life’s work. Transportation is the primary driver behind economic development and moving people out of poverty. Planners have a unique opportunity to affect real change in their communities. I hope my work leaves the world a little better than I found it.

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While many CAP grads have gone on to become transportation planners, I doubt many have had a career focused on freight planning. Delivery vehicles bring life’s necessities to stores, hospitals and increasingly to our doorsteps. USDOT estimates the average person consumes 60 tons of freight annually.

Despite the sizable impact this has on our neighborhoods, few complete streets or livable neighborhood initiatives consider deliveries. While neighborhoods should not be built around large tractor trailers, the consequence of not considering reasonably sized deliveries vehicles can be dramatic. As neighborhood businesses and residents demand deliveries, drivers will do what they need to do to make it happen. Often by parking illegally – blocking bike, travel lanes and even bus stops.

While a large part of my day is spent helping communities integrate these last mile challenges, I also work to develop bigger picture freight-related solutions for the public and private sectors. These projects have taken me to 25 states and four countries. I have led or worked on state and MPO freight plans, freight design guides, truck parking studies and scenario planning efforts in three countries.

A few projects stand out. My first freight planning job was at the Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission (MORPC) where I led a multi-jurisdictional partnership to prioritize, fund and accelerate the construction of $180 million of projects to alleviate congestion which threatened the long-term success of the Rickenbacker Inland Port. In the decade since I left MORPC, the Rickenbacker area has created over 10,000 jobs.

More recently, I have been working with Space Coast Florida to ensure the area’s multimodal transportation system will continue to support large oversize/overweight aerospace equipment moves, but also the day-to-day lives of the area’s residents. I’ve also worked on economic development efforts in rural Minnesota, eastern Kentucky and address equity issues created by 1960s-era Interstate construction.

For more information on freight planning, check out APA’s Freight Planning Policy Guide at: https://www.planning.org/policy/guides/adopted/freight/

Daniel Haake, AICP, CMILT, ENV SP ’04 MURP ’06, is a senior transportation planner with HDR in Indianapolis. He is chair of ITE’s Urban Goods Movement Standing Committee and TRB’s Trucking Industry Research Committee and a member of APA’s national Legislative and Policy Committee.